

He's **Your** SON



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**NATIONAL CHRISTIAN
WORKERS' MOVEMENT**

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This pamphlet has been prepared in consultation with members of the National Christian Workers' Movement. A corresponding one for mothers ("You Are Her Mother") has also been prepared with the help of members of the Married Women's Groups.

Copies of each are available at MELBOURNE SECRETARIAT OF CATHOLIC ACTION, 252 Swanston Street, Melbourne.

The "letter" has been placed in the centre of this booklet so that it can be readily detached. See explanation Pages 14 and 15.

“He’s Your Son”

An instruction to Fathers on how to train
their sons and how to impart sex knowledge
to them.

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FOREWORD

This booklet has been published to assist Catholic parents in the difficult and dangerous task of instructing their children in the knowledge of sex and its place in God's creation.

There are available on all sides books and publications on this subject written by pagans for pagans. But, unfortunately, our own Catholic literature avoids the difficult points, and throws the burden back upon the parents to find explanations for themselves. In some writings, too, the early training in modesty, which the Holy Father insists so strongly is the only sound basis for later knowledge, does not gain quite as much prominence as it seems to require.

It would be too much to expect that even this booklet will prove entirely satisfactory. But, until a better one is written, we hope that it will help parents to fulfil a duty that is far too often neglected.

M. CATARINICH,
National Chaplain,
N.C.W.M.

“He’s Your Son”

*We trust that the fathers into whose hands these pages come, will be careful and discreet both as to their use and their care; and that they will read the **WHOLE** contents carefully before attempting to apply any of it.*

Most fathers are afraid to assume their responsibilities in teaching their boys the truth about sex and marriage. Hence their children have to pick up from others, these often of bad moral character, their earliest and most lasting impressions of one of the holiest things that ever came from the hands of God—human love.

The reason of this fear is usually an altogether false notion of what the task would involve . . . Sitting young Frankie in a chair, with the remark: “I’ve got something important to say to you.” Then blushing scarlet, and stumbling through a hopelessly bad explanation, embarrassing both to the boy and to one’s-self. That is the usual picture in the mind of the parent. It betrays a great ignorance of the method of instructing, and a completely wrong assumption that this handiwork of God is something of its nature shameful; and therefore, difficult to put into words.

Let us put briefly the proper Catholic approach to the whole subject.

Sex-instruction means far more than just giving a child information. It takes in the whole virtue of modesty. If training in that virtue is neglected, sex-knowledge will come finally as a real danger, if not an entire disaster. Therefore a start must be made at the beginning.

EARLY GUIDANCE:

The practice of modesty is not something that comes naturally to a child. It is built up with training by the parents. A father should not leave the entire responsibility of this to his wife, even in early years; but should take his part in the up-bringing of the boys. If he helps in dressing and undressing, in washing and bathing, and other personal items of care, he has the opportunity of instilling and developing in them proper ideas of modesty—ideas they will put into practice when alone in bedroom or bathroom, or in the presence of other boys; where to undress; and when, and such like. A boy should never be given the impression that his body is unclean or nasty; but if a reason must be given, let it be that we should take "special" care of what God has given us. Usually, no explanation is even necessary.

If a father takes his part in training his child, he will have far less trouble later, not having lost touch with the boy by leaving all responsibility to mother. These things register in a child's mind, and produce results later in a surprising way.

RÉGARD FOR GIRLS:

The father should begin to educate his boys to be gentlemen as soon as possible. Let him teach them, when a practical opportunity presents itself, that a little girl is somewhat different from a boy, someone to be treated more gently in play, more politely in speech: and she should not be pulled about unduly, even in fun. It can be explained that they are not as strong as boys, and more easily hurt. This attitude lays the foundation for the respect and courtesy that is so often lacking in the present age between adult men and women.

COMPANIONSHIP:

Companions, too, must be watched, even in early years; because perversion of modesty in a child can have serious after-effects. His memory is surprisingly retentive of actions and conversations witnessed in youth, even though at the time they seemed to make no impression.

It sometimes happens that a small child, through no fault of his own is treated indecently by an older child. Should this occur, help your boy get the affair off his mind in confession, as that is by far the safest way to remove the memory without making too light of the incident.

4-12 AGES:

In the years between childhood and adolescence most fathers and sons drift apart. This is what creates a barrier to confidence in the 'teen years and makes later influence so difficult. The father should take care, therefore. A small child is extremely amusing and there is no credit in showing interest then. A boy approaching manhood becomes an agreeable companion. But in the 4-12 stage, when the child is just a wilful, unsettled boy, who likes fun, and seems to delight in annoying people and trying his father's patience, it is very easy then to leave him to Mum.

If you are a father of this type, don't wonder later that your boy shies at the thought of serious conversation with you. Any father can "hold" his boy without a great deal of inconvenience to himself. They have much in common; and can enjoy football, pictures and holidays together. There

should be no difficulty in keeping close to each other—that is, if the father is unselfish.

The establishing of friendship and mutual understanding is the only way to simplify the work of the next few years.

NEWSPAPERS, BOOKS, PERIODICALS:

A wise father will watch carefully what is brought into the home in the way of papers and magazines. Many parents go to great pains to keep their kiddies away from corrupting influences outside the home; but seem to forget the papers that go into sordid details of court proceedings, or carry illustrations of a vulgar and offensive nature. These can be a far greater danger in the house itself, the place where the child spends the greater part of his life. The adult children of the family are often as much to blame as the parents in this regard; and a careful watch therefore should be sustained until the **WHOLE** family is grown up.

PICTURES:

A boy should not be allowed to go indiscriminately to pictures; for morally bad pictures are so realistic and vivid that their effects are not easy to eradicate. Many of

the teen-age disasters between boy and girl are due to false notions of behaviour learned from the films, with their romantic love-at-first-sight friendships, and their indulgence in dangerous intimacies as a normal procedure. If the falsity of these ideas are not pointed out, then how can a boy know any different? Therefore, while every care should be taken to avoid these pictures, a useful purpose can be served by using those that do get by as an object lesson: "What sort of chap would he be, who would behave like that, Frank?"

Do not be slow to point out that good looks in a girl do not mean a clean mind, or decency in behaviour. The charming heroine in the screen-story, judged by Christian standards, is often just a disgusting piece of rubbish; and that fact can be utilised most effectively in "educating" your boy. Don't preach. Ask him his opinion; and teach him to think correctly for himself. He will thus acquire that essential quality of life, sound judgment, as well as ease and confidence in speaking about these things with you.

With pictures, certainly, should be included some of our radio plays and novels, even of the lighter kind.

THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS:

At the first sign of sex-development in your boy, you must realise that mind as well as body, is concerned in that change; and whilst your duty as a father will involve talking over the physical aspect of things (as is explained later), it is even more important to train the will to overcome temptation and keep passion in check. Evil thoughts, feelings and desires can now be troublesome; and you should carefully explain the differences between temptation and consent in these things—"A person knows clearly that their thoughts are bad, yet they deliberately continue with them. That is sin. One must know what one is thinking; then deliberately go on doing it. Unless that is so, no matter how nasty the temptation, no matter how long it lasts, or how often it returns, no sin is committed. And this is true regardless of the fact that the body itself may be somewhat affected by the thoughts."

Mention should be made, too, of the loss of seed in sleep with a boy who is getting to that age. But as this matter is made sufficiently clear in the "letter" in the centre of this booklet, we shall not go into further detail here.

Many a decent-minded lad has had to go through years of worry and distress, because his Dad did not think it worth while mentioning to him the difference in these things between temptation, through which God can be faithfully served, and consent, which brings about His displeasure.

You will give your boy greater confidence in yourself during this troublesome time, if he knows that you are praying for him. He should cultivate the Mother of God as his closest friend in temptation: and his Confessions and Communions should be regular. (Best achieved, surely, by going yourself with him!)

PRACTICAL INSTRUCTIONS:

Speaking of this matter, the present Holy Father, Pius XII, says: "... Thanks to the open-hearted confidence with which you have been able to inspire your children, you will not fail to watch for and to discern the moment when certain unspoken questions have occurred to their minds and are troubling their senses. It will then be the mother's duty to her daughters, the father's duty to his sons, carefully and delicately to unveil the truth as far as it appears necessary, to give a prudent, true and Christian answer to those questions, and to set their minds at rest."

(Continued on Page 11)

210 A.G.H.,
KURE,
JAPAN.

Dear Bill,

I do not send you serious letters very often; but just recently Brother Michael wrote to me to remind me that you are beginning to spring up; and it is time that I gave you some help about a matter that will be a cause of worry to you before long.

I suppose you remember asking me a long time ago, just before young Jimmy was born, why your mother had to go to hospital when God was giving us another baby. I told you then of the fact that a little babe does not begin its life upon this earth just when it is born; but that God forms it in its mother's body nine months before it ever sees the light of day. That long period is necessary before it becomes sufficiently strong to live apart from her. (You had never realised before just why we say that God became man on the 25th March, the day of the Annunciation, yet was not born at Bethlehem until 25th December.) It was due to the fact that mother had to go through a great deal of pain to

bring you, as well as young Jimmy, into the world, even to a certain extent endangering her life, that she went to hospital at the time.

I did not go into further details with you then, except to remind you that you owe your mother a great deal for what she did to give you life; and that you should always be mannerly towards her, even when she might be out of sorts. I was glad to see you give up the childish habit you had of answering back soon after that; and I was thankful that I had mentioned it to you.

However, Bill, I have to do more for you this time than give you just that brief knowledge; for if you are to grow into a decent man, you must know more of the way God brings life into the world, and how He intends the populating of heaven to go on. Unfortunately, in these days, there are only too many people keen to beat your old Dad to the starting post in telling you these things; and if I wait until I come home, you might already have picked up from the gutter your first and most lasting knowledge of one of the most perfect things that God has thought out—the love that begins life.

Maybe I can make this whole thing clearer by telling you something of Our Lady. (The Japanese Catholics, by the way, seem to love her even more than we do.)

Mary, of course, was no different from every other young mother that God has made. Within her was that first cradle that a babe ever knows—its mother's womb; and it was there that God the Son became Man. We often talk of the wonderful goodness of God in becoming a man at all; but I wonder how many of us realise that when Mary said to the Angel, "Be it done to me", He, the God of us all, became a tiny speck of life smaller than the full-stops on this page. For all life begins from a little cell in a mother's body just as small as that. If that is not giving up His power and His glory, I don't know what is!

Usually that cell gets its first beginnings as a human being by being joined by another from the father's body. But with Mary it was different. God worked a miracle in her case, and Baby Jesus was formed from her alone. God, you see, wished to remain the only father that that Baby ever had, even though He wished Mary to be Its true Mother. You will

realise from that fact, Bill, what we mean when we say that Our Lord was born of a "virgin" mother, and that Joseph, husband though he was to Mary, was but "foster father" to her Child.

Every other child who has come into life was formed from both father and mother. Each had their part in making it, and God Himself helped them. The way the father comes into the story is this:—A cell or seed forms in his body too, and, as I have already said, it is this that gives life to the other one in the mother. Curiously, this seed is not like the seeds of trees and flowers; it is a liquid. Nor does it find a place to grow as they do, simply through a chance gust of wind. No! This seed of life, as it is called, comes from the father's body when husband and wife are really deeply in love with each other; for it is God's wish that only in such love should babies be conceived at all. ("Conceived" means "formed" or "made").

Bill, if the seeds of tree or flower fall to the ground and are never given a chance of life, it does not matter much, does it? It happens so often in dry years. But it would be altogether different if the seed from which God wants heaven

itself filled with human beings, were wasted in this way. Yet there is only one place where it can give life to a tiny child if God wishes it so, and that is in that warm cradle in the mother's body where the other little cell awaits it. That is why when husband and wife are so much in love with each other that they know that the seed of life will flow, they must bring their bodies together so that it will not be lost and God be displeased; for He has made everything as easy as possible for them, as the part of the husband's body from which the seed flows will fit perfectly into the passage that leads to the womb. But even then, God Himself must create a soul if He wants a life to begin; for without a soul a baby could not exist at all.

* * *

From start to finish, then, Bill, you see that love is given to us by God, and His heaven can be filled only through it. That is the reason why dirty jokes and stories are so wrong. They throw filth and indecency over one of the finest things that God has made; and what is clever or funny about that is hard to see. We have always to guard ourselves against deliberately thinking in a nasty way about these things of God's making;

but what chance have we got if we make them dirty in our talk. Some day, Bill, maybe God will give you a girl to love and to marry. She'll be pure and decent, looking upon your love and hers as sacred. On that day you have to be able to look into her eyes and know that your mind and heart are as clean as her own.

There is one thing that I would like to say to you, Bill, before I end this long letter. You are coming to the stage in life when God is thinking of you as someone much more important, someone, in fact, who may be one day helping Him fill heaven. And in your own body before long (if not already) will form that liquid seed of life, the purpose of which I have mentioned. With every growing boy, it flows from the body in sleep fairly often, because God is always renewing it as He does the seeds in nature. Don't be worried when it does happen. What God brings about cannot be sinful or wrong, even though at times rather queer dreams accompany it. There is all the world of difference between this occurrence that we cannot help, and deliberately making the seed flow ourselves, which, of course, is always seriously wrong.

One final word, Bill. As I have told you, love it is that fills heaven. Now you can take it for granted that the Devil is not very happy about that, and if he can spoil love for you by giving you impure ideas about it, he certainly will. I have little doubt that you'll find him trying before long.

Now this might help you: No matter how long he pesters you by pushing rotten thoughts into your head, no matter how dirty his suggestions, or how often he comes back with them, he can't make you sin unless you PURPOSELY keep thinking of them. He'll sneak filth into your mind so quietly at times that it will be a while before you even know that it is there. But no matter; once you wake up to it, out with it; and think of the hiding your team is going to give the others next Saturday instead. Or say a short prayer to Our Lady if you are too sleepy for anything else.

Be a gentleman always, Bill, in girls' company. Don't touch them too closely; it arouses impure thoughts in your mind towards them; and that is the worst insult you can give a girl. She might

never know; but God certainly does, and she is His daughter by her baptism.

All the very best, Bill; and rest assured that you are always in my prayers. Should anything upset you or cause you temptation in any of these things, ask your priest in Confession. He knows all about it, and will advise you what is best to do to get over your trouble.

Yours affectionately,

DAD.

A few points to notice:

Firstly: We have already insisted upon that open-hearted confidence which you must inspire in your boy. Never break down that confidence by a harsh or sharp answer to a delicate and unexpected question. It is easy to say: "Why are you thinking about those things?" when you are taken off your guard.

Secondly: Teach your boy as gradually as possible over a period of years, not going beyond what is necessary at any given time. Your wife will get opportunities to assist you in this, particularly in the early stages of knowledge—baby life, and such like. But do not leave it all to her; as it is difficult to deal with the more delicate things when your boy is sensitive fourteen, if you have not taken part in earlier explanations.

The fact of "Motherhood" can be given when a child is quite young; but, if the opportunity is derived from the expected arrival of a new babe in the home,

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he should be cautioned most carefully not to speak about it to others.

Later, some idea that the father has a part in the forming of the child, may have to be given if the child asks questions. The simplest explanation is that "a baby forms from a tiny seed placed in the mother's body by the father, to which God gives a soul." Besides being truthful, this usually satisfies the child; and is a useful fact to build upon in later explanations.

(The parents should remember that a question such as this is just one of a thousand that a child asks about every subject under the sun. It places no more importance on the answer to this one, than on any others; and its mind is on something entirely different three seconds later. But the information is on the pages of its memory to be reflected upon perhaps years later, when the reason begins to stir. The child who asks questions is a far easier person to deal with than one who never opens his mouth.)

Thirdly: The Holy Father states that at adolescence, the questions will be for the most part "unspoken" and you must watch for them." Do not wait too long! The world is shouting the answers to these questions; and your boy will learn them from your lips or from the gutter, and be influenced by whatever he hears first.

Parents are often bewildered as to what age a child should be given the "older" information.

It would be unwise for us to state any exact age. 14 was given as a suggestion until a few years ago. But parents are finding now that boys in particular are "pick-up" information much younger than that; and priests working in the industrial suburbs testify that in the 11-12 age many of our kiddies acquire adult knowledge. But there is also this fact to be considered, that individual children vary a great deal in nature and development, and only a parent can weigh this factor in relationship to the sheltered or totally unsheltered

circumstances in which his boy is placed.

Therefore as the occasion arises with each child, a father should say a prayer to Almighty God, weigh all the circumstances, and make his decision confidently. For, did not God promise His help in this and any other troublesome difficulty of parenthood when He gave the graces of Matrimony.

Finally: The "Letter" has been included to give you a simple form of explanation. It certainly should NOT be given to a child who is young or undeveloped; and even with an older child, a word of mouth explanation might be preferable. The father must make up his mind for himself. No two children are alike, and no general rule can be given.

If the "Letter" is given to a boy, it is most important that he should be left alone to absorb the contents privately. He should not be given the opportunity to hand it on to other boys; and

should be warned against discussing it with other boys. But, after he has read it, the father himself should go through it with him, explaining any part that is not clear. This method has been tried and proved satisfactory.

The "Letter" purposes to give the "basic" facts in a nice way. But most 'teen age boys will require more accurate and detailed knowledge as they grow older; and new conditions, such as going to work, will call for help and advice as to the best method of handling the "filthy talk" problem, and similar difficulties.

But any common-sense father who has established a bond of confidence with his son, and has given him the early essentials, will find no trouble in these later years.

THE "GIRL" PROBLEM:

The 'teen age presents another difficulty closely connected with bodily development—the growing interest in girls. This is, of course, as God intended: and while it

should be kept in check, it should not be stifled. But positive training in good manners and general courtesy will now be necessary if your boy is to avoid unbecoming behaviour. If his knowledge of how to get along in mixed company has been drawn solely from novels and films, he will certainly have a hard job to keep decent. So let your advice be positive and helpful, not just a series of "don'ts."

We cannot, of course, deal with all this in detail; but we will give a few general suggestions.

Every boy should know that these ordinary rules of manners are Christian in their origin. They are based upon this plain fact that a girl is God's own daughter by her baptism, and should be treated as such; and secondly, that it was from her sex, and not ours, that God chose the only human being to whom He has ever stood in debt—His own mother. Our ordinary manners towards women-folk are simply an acknowledgment of these two truths.

Your boy should know and practice, therefore, the common rules of correct conduct towards womanhood: raising his cap; giving up his seat in tram or train to a woman whether she be young or old; rising when

a woman enters the room for the first time, and seeing that she is seated before he looks to himself; giving women the right-of-way through doorways or on narrow footpaths, allowing them the bannister on stairs; walking on the gutter side of a street in their company. Frequently he will have his own mother to practise upon in many of these things. If your boy knows how to treat womanhood with respect, he will learn quickly enough to think of womanhood with respect also.

With regard to mixed company, he should be friendly and cheerful with all alike, not showing that rotten ill-breeding that pays particular attention to the more attractive whilst neglecting the rest . . . He should know the safe old adage—"Keep with the crowd," and should realise that straying away from the others at outings and gatherings in single company is positively rude, besides being dangerous . . . He should realise that youth is the time to acquire an accurate knowledge of ALL feminine character, so that a sound choice can be made later in life; and therefore the evident foolishness of strict company-keeping with ONE person in those all too brief years . . . He

should know that unbecoming language or crudeness, bad enough in male company, is simply unforgivable in the presence of girls . . . And when he is old enough, the etiquette of dancing should be explained to him; how to ask; how to escort a girl back to her seat; how to behave if taking her home.

In a word, he must, in these years, develop a real Christian friendliness, mindful that he is the guardian of others' virtue, as well as his own; and purity must be cultivated both in manner and in heart. This is only possible by shunning coarseness in speaking or thinking of girls, by avoiding over-familiarity in handling them, and, in later years, keeping away from those pitfalls to purity, drink and dangerous privacy, that have ruined the morals of so many young people.

Once again, Pius XII: "Your words, if they are wise and discreet, will prove a safeguard and a warning in the midst of the temptation and corruption which surround them, 'because foreseen, an arrow comes more slowly'."

CONCLUSION:

Undoubtedly there is much that has been left out in these pages; much that could be explained better. But no amount of writing can answer every question or solve every situation. It is for the father himself to turn to the God who placed those boys in his hands, and ask for the grace and wisdom necessary for their proper upbringing. No advice, no information given can ever replace the guidance of the Holy Spirit; and He is never deaf to the voice of the father who invokes Him.

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